it would seem as if the eruption had traced itself out on this nerve's distribution. The curiously localized lesion, with its hypertrophic scaly appearance, gave rise to the suggestion that perhaps a tubercular syphilide had developed along the course of a damaged sciatic nerve. A negative Wassermann test would seem to rule out this possibility, and one's inclination next was to consider that the lesion was one of lichen planus of rather interesting and unusual distribution. Dr. D. King Smith concurred with this view. The fact, moreover, was elicited that considerable itching had been present. The question of a syphilitic origin of the lesion was therefore laid aside. The photograph shows well the remarkable distribution of the eruption and its curious warty appearance; white striæ cannot be made out in the photograph. There were no patches elsewhere on the body surface and none on the mucous membranes. It is early as yet to speak of any results of treatment. One knows, however, that, even if running a very chronic course, the lesions may completely clear up. Local applications in which liquor plumbi, liquor carbonis detergens, bichloride of mercury, phenol, menthol and thymol are present have been found useful. X-ray treatment is often applied to the chronic patches. Antipyrin and salicin are useful in controlling inflammation and itching. We hope to report further on this case at a later date.

Editorial

PLEURAL SHOCK

IN his paper on "Pleural Shock", published in this issue, Dr. Hamilton brings forward a curiously intriguing problem. Pleural shock is rare; it is extremely disquieting even when it is not fatal; its causation is obscure. And yet it is an incident which is likely to occur to many physicians now that artificial pneumothorax has become so widely used. Dr. Hamilton reviews the whole subject admirably. He points out how little is known of the mechanism underlying this type of shock, and makes it clear that no theory has yet been advanced which takes full account of all the facts. Cocke's recent paper* on the same subject is even more avowedly sceptical of present theories. The two main views are (*a*) that the shock is due to air embolism; (*b*) that it is the result of a reflex set up by pleural irritation. These probably will have to borrow from each other to fit the needs of the problem; as Cocke says:

> "That air embolism is a real occurrence I do not for a moment deny. That it further produces a syndrome quite similar to pleural shock is obvious . . . . I repeat, however, that at present I believe that it is quite probable that shock from air embolism is probably a rather rare occurrence, whereas shock from pleural irritation is probably a relatively common occurrence."

We can at least be forewarned. There seems little else that we can extract from the situation; unless it be that the very least complaint from the patient undergoing collapse treatment should be carefully heeded —more particularly that ominous one of "feeling queer". There should also be a more complete pooling of experience, for there is little doubt that more cases occur than are reported. H. E. M.

*Cocke, C. H.: Pleural Shock, *Am. Rev. Tub.*, 1931, **31**: 408.

THE DEPOPULATION OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC ISLANDS

ONE of the most familiar, possibly also one of the most melancholy, facts in history is the disastrous effect on health that has followed the opening up of new countries by European pioneers. The North American Indian race bears sad witness to the ravages of the small-pox introduced by the early Western explorers, a reversal of this fate being the carrying back of syphilis or the great pox, from the New World to the Old. Similar consequences have occurred in the case of the natives of the Pacific Islands, that immense area lying to the north and east of Australia. They are admirably discussed by S. M. Lambert in a paper prepared under the auspices of the Inter-

national Health Division of the Rockefeller Foundation.* How much, he asks, have the Pacific native races suffered since the European contact began? Has this decline in numbers been due to the diseases which were supposed to have come in with the white man, or is it an inherent process of degeneration and decay, as some claim? There is little doubt that these native populations were immensely greater one hundred and fifty years ago, that is at about the time of Captain Cook's voyages. The population of Tahiti, *e.g.*, estimated by Cook at 204,000, has shrunk to 9,072.

But Lambert insists that the situation should be viewed as a whole; there has been too great a tendency to judge the whole Pacific area by isolated instances. He speaks optimistically of conditions in American Samoa and the British colonies of the Cook Islands, Fiji, Western Samoa and Tonga, and amongst the Maoris of New Zealand. The native races here are vigorous and are eager to improve, and the various governmental and missionary agencies are learning not to make the native man's way of life conform with that of the white man so much as to get them to deal with the altered conditions induced by Western contact.

There is no doubt that the natives are slowly beginning to increase in areas which up to thirty or forty years ago showed sharply diminishing numbers. Take Samoa for example. The first available estimate of the population is that of Commodore Wilks in 1838, who put it at 45,000. For the next fifty years there was a rapid decrease, as in 1886 the number was 29,000. Then the tide turned and in 1932 the number was back to 44,000. One of the chief factors in this was a brilliant public health campaign between 1923 and 1927, in which immense efforts were made to improve public health.

A great deal of statistical material is presented to show that this upward tendency in numbers is evident in many other islands. The key of the situation is control of disease and the various means of dealing with it, such as by training natives in medicine, and increasing public health efforts are undertaken. But the difficulties are almost overwhelming in some parts. At any rate Lambert makes a strong case to show that the decay of the native races is not any mysterious, inevitable process, but one which has resulted from disease, and that it can be and in some parts is being dealt with by medical efforts, both preventive and curative.

H. E. M.

*Depopulation of Pacific Races. S. M. Lambert. 42 pp. Pub. by Bernic P. Bishop Museum, Spec. Pub. 23.

Editorial Comments

A New Treatment for Cancer

Much interest has been aroused, both in lay and medical circles, in a new treatment for cancer devised by Dr. Hendry C. Connell, of Kingston, Ontario, which he has been trying out during the past four or five months. We are sure that a detailed statement on the matter will be welcomed by our readers. We therefore wish to draw particular attention to Doctor Connell's paper entitled "The study and treatment of cancer by proteolytic enzymes", which appears on page 364 of this issue. It is of the nature of a preliminary report, and it is expected that further communications will be made on the matter as the investigation develops.

So many cancer "cures" are being reported these days that the medical profession at large has developed an attitude of horrid incredulity in regard to them, to the extent that it is almost impossible for the research worker who has a new idea to bring it forward with any hope of having it judged on its merits. We are glad to know that Doctor Connell is in a more favourable position. He has associated with him a number of men of high repute in the profession, representing various aspects of medicine, men capable of weighing evidence, so that we are sure his work is being thoroughly and scientifically carried on, and his conclusions, whatever they may eventually prove to be, will be accepted as accurate. Those who have seen the cases of cancer under his treatment have been impressed with the results he can show, which, to say the least, are encouraging. Certainly, his work cannot be lightly passed by.

In the paper published here Doctor Connell, who is an eye specialist, narrates how he came upon the idea of treating cancer by means of proteolytic enzymes as an outcome of his experimental studies on the cataractous lens, an